

Remarks at a United We Serve Event

June 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Well, first of all, it is great to see all of you here today. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here participating, all the families and young people who are here. I, obviously, have to thank my wife, Michelle Obama, who has spent much of her adult life focused on service. You know, she understands that nothing's more powerful than when you enlist the skill and talent and passion of the American people on behalf of helping others. And she's been doing that all her life, and she's doing just a great job as First Lady in making that happen.

I want to thank all the men and women here at Fort McNair and all those who serve our country under our proud flag. We're grateful to each and every one of you. Those Americans in uniform, it's clear the nature of their service. I think sometimes what's forgotten is when one person in the family serves in our Armed Forces, that means the entire family is serving. And it's very gratifying to see all of you committed to helping to put together some backpacks and care packages for military families all across the country. This is an issue that Michelle has taken extraordinary interest in during the course of our campaign. She would meet with military families and discover that, despite all the things that Government may want to do, there are still a lot of holes and a lot of gaps that need to be filled in terms of giving the support to our military families that's necessary, and that's where you come in.

So we're very proud of them, but we're very proud of you. And we always want to remember that serving our country is not just something that we should expect our members of our Armed Forces to do, that's something that we should expect all of us as citizens to do.

On Monday, we launched "United We Serve," our summer service initiative. It's going to run all the way through our National Day of Service on September 11th. We want to ask every American to take some time out this summer to do something for others. Parents take your kids. They're going to have fun, they're going to be in sports camps, they're going to be watching TV and playing video games—once a week, take them down, whether it's to a soup kitchen or to volunteer on a community project, teach them what it means to be a real citizen. You'll find that, actually, the kids love it, and it's going to make a lasting impression on them. And if all of us are doing that this summer, then we're going to make this country stronger. We're working hard and Members of Congress are working really hard right now, to make our Government work for people, but Government can only do so much. Ultimately, the strength of America doesn't come from Capitol Hill, it doesn't come from the White House, it comes from the grassroots, and that's what all of you are about.

So I appreciate you. I hope you guys have some great fun today. I notice the air conditioning is on in here, which—[laughter]—sometimes, with some of these service projects, you got to change shirts at the end of the day. So enjoy yourselves, and I hope I get a chance to say thank you personally and shake some hands before the day is done. All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

Oh, one other thing that I wanted to mention—and since we've got a lot of press here—sometimes people want to be involved in service but don't know how to get involved in service. And so what I want to do is just remind people, if you go to serve.gov—serve.gov—that will give you an entire toolkit for how you can sign up for service in your communities. So there's

no excuses. And you can find the service project that's right for you. If you care about animals, you can find a shelter that helps with stray animals. If you care about tutoring kids or you've got an education background, you'll be able to find something that allows you to use your particular skills.

So get on serve.gov, and that's how you're going to be identify—going to be able to identify the service project that's right for you and your family. All right? Thank you, everybody. Have fun.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at Fort Lesley J. McNair. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included remarks by First Lady Michelle Obama.

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